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CURRENT OPINION

Shall We Fear to Be Happy?

Arthur Clutton-Brock contributes to the good cheer of the approaching Christmas season by his discussion of "The Pursuit of Happiness" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December. In this "Christmas sermon," as he styles it, he runs counter to current ethical and religious orthodoxy by challenging the assumption that happiness must be pursued, and is attainable only as a by-product. After instancing the failure of Germany and England alike to find happiness in the pursuit of power in the one case and riches in the other, he takes issue with the notion that there is an instinctive quest for happiness, which needs modifying or diverting into some other channel. Ideas of God and of nature in all stages of religious and moral development reflect but little of the optimism implied in such a natural tendency. Fear predominates over hope, and fear is *the* deadly sin. The idea of the malice of circumstance is deeply rooted in human reactions and closely associated with the instinct of self-preservation.

In marked contrast to the pessimistic trend of religious thinking in our own time no less than at the beginning of the Christian Era is the happy biblical affirmation, "God is love." Yet the writer had to add, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and we accept that contradictory statement as equally true, and interpret the former accordingly; we can't believe it and take it seriously. The father who says "This hurts me more than it does you" is a by-word. Jesus teaches that God's love is like a father's; he doesn't chasten; he forgives. But we are not willing to heed the parable of the Prodigal Son who repents only when he comes to himself and contrasts his own misery with the happiness of his abandoned home. The father doesn't chastise him, doesn't even improve the occasion; he

just forgives him. Nor does he even punish or rebuke the censorious elder brother; he pleads with him. This is all too good to be true; so we deny God and follow the devil of duty or patriotism or common sense, because we are afraid of happiness. We want a God like that, but the picture is beautiful rather than true. Jesus says this beauty is truth. God is just like that, and he really enjoys forgiving.

Perfect love is needed to cast out the fear of happiness, a fear which exists because we are not fully human yet, and so do not know what happiness really is. The word humanity is a prophecy of what we shall be when we understand ourselves and are capable of having a single, adequate aim. Humanity means men in right relation, just as beauty means things in right relation. The test of this rightness is happiness. The attempt to pursue happiness alone is like trying to play tennis alone, and shows ignorance of what happiness really is. We find it only as we give it to others, yet not altogether in the orthodox acceptance of that statement; for happiness is by its very nature something to be had in common, the token of a right relation achieved, apart from which one cannot deny one's self having as yet no self to deny. Thus the egotist tries to indulge a self not yet achieved, and the altruist may be similarly astray in his efforts at self-sacrifice. This imperfect selfhood makes us hard on ourselves and on others; our sense of sin too often amounts to an identification of the past, partial self as the real self. A proper sense of sin is but recognition of refusal to maintain those right relations in which selfhood is achieved and happiness found.

Jesus' command to love finds an echo in our hearts, but his poetical, paradoxical sayings need translation into everyday prose, that we may achieve a technique of

Christian conduct, a practical love that is tolerant because it has a sense of humor and recognizes one's own inadequacies and inconsistencies as well as those of other people. Instead of that we believe men are unwilling to confess and repent until we pull a long face, the very thing that makes them deny their wrongdoing. We can't make Germany repent by preaching at her, as experience shows. The best way to get a man to repent is to forgive him beforehand, and that not as a virtue but as a matter of course. Making an example of the evildoer does him little good, and us still less. By refusing to be bound or to let others be bound by the past, by good-humored, spontaneous forgiveness, by aiming together at happiness which is rightness of relation, we achieve happiness together.

Hymns as Theology

Not the official theologians of the church so much as the hymn-writers are responsible for the prevailing Christian doctrines; and chief among these self-appointed popularizers of theology is Isaac Watts, of whom Frederic Palmer writes in the *Harvard Theological Review*. Watts marks the transition from psalm-singing to hymn-singing. During the seventeenth century metrical versions of the Psalms were commonly used; but anything less strictly scriptural was generally discountenanced. Before he was fifteen years old, young Watts took exception to the versions of his day and decided that he could do better. This fact is significant in appraising the value of his hymns as poetry: that he wrote in answer to the demand of an occasion rather than because of an inward impulse to self-expression. Hence many of his hymns justify the impression that they are made to order. Even so, his early efforts were a decided improvement over the literal wooden translations of the Psalms to which he objected; and it was not long before he went beyond the accepted usage in writing hymns, saturated with

Scripture and theology to be sure, but broader in scope and more imaginative in treatment than the current psalmody. As a pastor without arduous parish responsibilities, on account of poor health, he had abundant leisure for writing. His published works include scientific, philosophical, and theological treatises, but it is to his hymns that he owes his reputation. Written for use in public worship, they became popular at once, and have remained so to this day. Even yet in many of our hymn-books the name of Watts is found more often than that of any other writer.

The value of Watts's hymns as purveyors of doctrines is less in the opinions they inculcate than in the moods they convey. Much of the subject-matter expresses a somber theology. The majesty of God is a constantly recurring theme, as is the imminence of death and the terrors of hell, while he delights to picture the joys of heaven. But his theology was more severe than his practice, and it may be said of him, "Much of that which he felt bound to hold, he, like other people, found it convenient not to be held by." His hymns are notable first of all for their reverence, the attitude of worship expressed; then for depth of feeling, theology in terms of emotion; introspection again is characteristic of them because of his individualistic theology; and associated with all these is the homiletic motive. But there is also a love of beauty evident, both in appreciation of nature and in attention to literary style, almost unknown among Dissenters of his day. It is furthermore his merit to have introduced children into poetry, in his "Divine and Moral Songs." He well deserves his fame as "the first Englishman who set the gospel to music."

What Soldiers Believe about Death

The *American Journal of Theology* for October contains a suggestive presentation of "Our Soldiers' Doctrine of Death."

The author, C. H. Dickinson, points out that for the soldier, death like any other duty is all in the day's work. So he does not seem to make much of it, and his failure to take it seriously offends both our personal and our religious sentiments. How can he be apparently indifferent to that possibility of parting which is so significant to us? And how can he be so lacking in a sense of the religious import of death—something that he ought to prepare for? His attitude is due mainly to military discipline. It is his business to obey orders. That is taken for granted, and if death is a consequence of obeying orders, it is a part of his duty. He does not need to be supplied with exalted motives for suffering and dying, for doing his duty. He has it to do, that is all; the duty is concrete in the deed. There is little sense in talking Christian motives to persuade a man to do what military discipline requires. Such obedience has a moral quality, for it is not forced, slavish submission; it is duty recognized and appreciated. Nor does the soldier think of himself as exceptional in his attitude toward death as incidental to duty. Anyone in his place would think and act as he does.

This attitude is opposed alike to that which sees death as a finality and to that which views death as the gate to heaven. Men to whom death is incidental to duty have in them that which denies the finality of death. They show that spirituality is universally attainable; for duty is the path by which we enter the spiritual universe. Furthermore that life of duty is a social life, that duty is social. But if duty and spiritual reality are thus related, what of the heaven that lies beyond death? It must have something in common with what is spiritual on this side of death. It cannot be such a contrast to this life: faith exchanged for sight; duty, service, sacrifice for reward; a place for a few individuals. Since an eternal spiritual life is demonstrated by the fact of duty, faced unflinchingly, as a

matter of course, by the rank and file of our army, it follows that such spiritual life is accessible to common experience, is social in essence, is guided to social ends, and is fulfilled in sacrifice. By taking death as all in the day's work, the soldier reveals to us the glory of the day's work.

Were the Hebrews Democrats?

Writing for the October number of the *Yale Review*, Professor Charles F. Kent finds in Palestine the birthplace of a democracy centuries antecedent to the democracies of Greece and the Roman Republic, and more worthy in some respects of such designation than they, or indeed than our own country. The Semitic tribe was organized for the welfare of its members, each of whom had a say in settling questions and selecting leaders whose authority was delegated and who were in fact as in theory servants of the people. This principle of government the Hebrews took with them into Palestine, where they maintained it loyally in the face of hostile autocracies. Their judges and early kings were chosen for their experience or capacity as military leaders, and it was in gratitude for services rendered only less than for continued service that their authority was made lifelong, and transmitted to their descendants. Saul recognized the prowess of David as endangering his own hold and that of his descendants upon the kingship. David's dying wish that Solomon should succeed him was respected by the people, whose confirmation of that choice was none the less necessary; and in the case of Rehoboam, the more democratic northern tribes refused to abide by Solomon's choice because they were not assured that he would not exploit rather than serve them.

We are misled by the words "king" and "kingdom" as applied to the Hebrew commonwealth, for the Hebrew word does not imply absolute authority. The kings were counselors or advisers, like the tribal

sheiks, and the people reserved the right to overrule their decisions. When autocratic ideas of kingship were introduced by Solomon and Ahab, the people resisted them as an innovation, although these men were able to maintain their policies by force of arms. When they died the people reasserted themselves.

Moreover, town government among the Hebrews was democratic in marked contrast to the cities of Canaan, or later of Greece. Authority was vested in a village council rather than in a king or governor, and political, social, religious, and legal questions were discussed and settled in open assembly. These town meetings developed a democratic atmosphere apart from which the unique work of the great prophets cannot be understood, for the prophets were protagonists of the common people, protesting against the various forms of oriental despotism with which Israel came into contact at different periods in her history. Amos and Isaiah carried democratic ideals from politics into economics and religion, and the Deuteronomic code gives evidence of a bold attempt to incorporate the social principles of these prophets in laws and institutions. Suggested reforms were preventive as well as remedial.

It was largely because of their painful contacts with other nations that the Hebrews were so exclusive in their practice of democracy, but their prophets had the broader vision expressed in Micah, chapter 4, which forecasts a league of nations, and Isaiah, chapter 19, which places Israel on a level with her traditional foes. Thus they laid foundations on which Jesus could build his program for a universal democracy. In his teaching again we are misled by the word "kingdom" and its autocratic connotations. "The democracy of God" better expresses his meaning, and Paul may have avoided that word "kingdom" because of his democratic principles, speaking instead of the church as the "body of Christ," a conception which

he develops in a thoroughly democratic fashion.

Israel's laws were copied by the founders of the American commonwealth, notably in the early days of the New Haven and Massachusetts Bay colonies, and the influence of her institutions, civil and religious, is seen no less in town meetings than in services and places of worship. But even more, the democracy that is now sweeping the world is instinct with the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, with their message of political and economic justice, of equality of religious and social opportunity, and of universal responsibility.

The Conception of a Finite God

Mr. H. G. Wells is by no means the first writer who has maintained that God is finite, but his advocacy of such a conception has stimulated a vast amount of discussion and has led many a theologian to put the question to himself whether the God he really believes in is infinite; while not a few have followed the example of Mr. Wells by rushing into print, in protest against his idea of God, or sometimes conceding the pertinency of certain of his observations instead of classifying them as all alike impertinent. Dr. F. R. Tennant, of Trinity College, Cambridge, evidently has Mr. Wells's book in mind as he discusses the problem in a recent issue of the *Expository Times*.

The word "infinite" as a theological term is not scriptural, nor is the conception that it implies required by the nature of religious or specifically Christian experience, whose demand is for an *adequate* God. This term, so frequently, almost universally, employed in Christian theology, is borrowed from Greek philosophy, and Dr. Tennant asks whether such borrowing is necessary or beneficent. The connotation in Greek literature is not always the same. Sometimes "infinite" means "without defining limitations" and is thus equivalent to "absolute" as often used. In this sense it

is found in gnostic and mystic writings, and perhaps occasionally in some of the Alexandrine Fathers. Again it has the mathematical sense, endless as to time, space, or number, which manifestly has little value for theology, as if to say, "Can man by adding find out God?" In Plato, infinity implies perfection or immutability, ideas incompatible with certain theistic beliefs. The new mathematical doctrine of infinity has nothing to offer us. So, as the word has no definite content, and as its various meanings are more or less inappropriate to Christian thought, there is a tendency to use other words, such as "perfect" or "eternal," in place of "infinite." The Christian's God is not indeterminate, and the word "infinite" as applied to him has come to denote a measure of determinateness, which needs careful defining. The attributes rather than the person of God have been described as infinite—omnipotence and omniscience, for example. But omnipotence is not unlimited in view of such other conceptions as providence and purpose, alike related to a time-process, so that since Origen's day men have spoken of God's self-limitation, which serves very well to provide for actual limitations but suggests that God is what he is by an act of will rather than as an expression of his own nature. The idea of human freedom is of course inconsistent with an unlimited omnipotence, and, though less apparently, none the less in fact, with absolute omniscience. The free acts of God's creatures are their own creations, not his, and as such are not a part of his knowledge, which is thus limited in accordance with his purpose of bringing into existence free beings.

Those who still insist on calling God infinite tend to identify him with the Absolute, thus implicitly denying his personality and ethical goodness. God is limited by his creatures, or there is no such thing as individuality or freedom. To escape from a pantheism in which such human values as good and evil are meaningless, we are bound

to think of God as determinate, limited in power and knowledge, the mystics to the contrary notwithstanding, for so-called "immediate experience" is largely an interpretation, psychologically explicable, and does not require a corresponding objective reality. On the other hand, such a God is much more and other than a consciousness compounded of the best elements in our consciousness.

The World-wide Social Peril

The increasing disappointment and apprehension over social conditions in Europe and America are pointedly expressed by H. G. Moulton in the *Yale Review* for October. Professor Moulton's article is entitled "The Rising Tide of Social Unrest." Reviewing the alarming spread of the red peril in Europe, the economic crisis in England, and unemployment in America, the writer finds acute industrial and social unrest the world over. The optimists of the armistice days are now asking with a certain distinguished liberal M.P.: "Is the Christian Era which began with the crucifixion of an individual to end with the immolation of society?"

The causes of the intense world-situation are analyzed in some detail. The recently entertained expectation of easy prosperity was so ill founded as to be ridiculous. Among the factors which made it impossible of fulfilment are mentioned the disorganization of world-trade, of industry, and of foreign exchanges, and extreme variations of prices and incomes. These factors were entirely ignored by the prophets of prosperity, who fallaciously argued that the shortage of labor and the demand for production would produce good economic conditions. The world's population, while needing and led to expect increased production, is confronted with a greatly reduced producing power. While the number to be supplied with goods has been slightly reduced, the supply of goods has been greatly reduced, national resources depleted,

and world economic organization shattered. The last-mentioned factor is the most serious and determinative. Again, on account of the reduction in equipment for industry, there is in fact a surplus instead of a scarcity of labor in relation to the possibility of employment. The promises made by statesmen to labor in the late stages of the war but accentuate the tendency of the workers to complain of prices, rents, and unemployment. The war has not created but only advanced the cause of industrial democracy. The demand for social readjustment is greatly in advance of sound knowledge of the subject, and therein lies the peril. Bolshevism spreads as a result of social despair. The Russian Red Guard is recruited from the unemployed, who face the alternative of starvation or adherence to Bolshevism. The process goes on in Central Europe. In the opinion of experts consulted by the writer, Russia is bound for total economic collapse, in which Western Europe is also imperiled. In the United States there is a continued increase in unemployment, and the problem is still unsolved. But the abundant harvest in America will tend to an expansion of trade. The crisis for America will come, in Mr. Moulton's view, not immediately, but in a year or two, when Europe either begins to pay interest on her debts in goods and services or else utterly collapses. If Europe survives, her industrial and agricultural competition will bring American industry to the test.

The attempt by the Railway Brotherhood to eliminate profit from the railway administration is symptomatic of the present aims of labor. The overthrow of capitalism, possible in Europe, will not come in America without a period of industrial warfare.

The Conditions of Industrial Peace

The *New Republic* for October 1 editorially discusses the possibility of an industrial truce. With a million houses too few for the nation's population, and the danger of

a coal shortage, even a temporary lull in the industrial strife would be welcomed. The nation is paying in restricted production for the industrial war. But statesmen who are demanding a truce should remember that in military affairs a truce is not made unconditionally, except in a case of absolute deadlock. The Germans had to accept an armistice that took account not only of military positions but of relative potential force. Labor is, in this struggle, in the position of the allies in the field. It feels that it has the power and the right to win, and will not accept an armistice on terms which represent a deadlock.

Labor has not used up all its reserves. The urgency of increased production is a cumulative force working in favor of the claims of labor. Yet the laborer's pay has not increased so rapidly as the cost of living, and to pause in the conflict while this is the case would be to accept defeat where victory is apparently possible. To base a settlement on the expectation of a fall in prices would be unjustified.

The primary condition on which labor can be expected to negotiate a truce, the editor believes, is the regulation of wages by prices so that the purchasing power of wages will not be less than in 1913. Together with this should go the sharing by labor in industrial control.

Social Instruction for the Catholic Laity

Catholic leaders, at least in America, show a disposition to enlist the laity in all their endeavors, and are now seeking aid in that quarter rather than from the Pope or the hierarchy in meeting the social crisis.

The *Catholic World* for August contains an article on "Catholic Social Study" by Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C. The writer's aim is to encourage Catholics to become familiar with the church's social teaching, in order that they may make that teaching effective in the new era. The urgent need

for such study has impressed itself upon Father Cuthbert, in view of the remaking of civilization and the prevalent lack of information among the Catholic laity regarding the church's position on the social questions of the day. Very significantly, the present crisis in world-affairs is interpreted as the break up, not of the medieval system, but of a system that supplanted the medieval through the two great apostasies of the pagan Renaissance and Protestantism. The fact that the present revolt against rationalism and immoral capitalism is largely a vindication of medieval principles is recognized, it is claimed, by many non-Catholic students of history.

Catholics may therefore turn with energy to the task of building up the new social order. They have encouragements in their task. The League of Nations voices an ideal to which Catholicism naturally responds. Are not the revolutionary claims of organized labor only revolutionary in a world that long ago revolted against Catholicism? Further, the old attitude of suspicion toward Catholic teaching is giving way to one of expectancy.

The clergy have their part to play, but the real work of social reconstruction will fall largely upon the laity, and therefore the social education of the laity is of paramount importance. The general ignorance of the laity on social questions Father Cuthbert attributes to the period during which Catholics were shut out from public life. But already in England much progress has been made through the agency of the Catholic Social Guild, which aims to instruct and to unify the sentiment of all classes from the coal miner to the university man.

It is those who are taught to think politically and socially who will have the deciding voice in the reconstruction of the future. Catholicism, if it is to achieve this place, must make an organized endeavor to provide sound instruction in Catholic social principles. Behind this instruction

of the laity there must be provided a body of expert teachers, men and women to carry on the work on the platform and in the press and to criticize and guide the organizations employed. The church does not possess the necessary colleges for this, and must for the present depend on social study centers, some of which already exist. Father Cuthbert desires to see Catholic scholarship undertake and pursue this task with the same zeal and efficiency as characterized the Schoolmen of the thirteenth century. Social thinking is as universal today as Aristotelian forms of thought were in that age. As then the demand was for a harmonizing of faith and the "new logic," so today there is a demand for the alignment with Christian morality of the new ideas of social justice.

Defense of the English "Enabling Bill"

The "Enabling Bill" is still a bone of contention in English church circles and has received much criticism from various points of view. J. H. B. Masterman, one of its sponsors, writes in defense of the measure in the *Contemporary Review* for September. His arguments are specially directed to liberal churchmen, few of whom favor the bill. He remarks that its critics come from both extremes of opinion, and that it has been attacked as a sacerdotal measure and as a concession to democratic ideas. The real motive of the framers of the bill, he assures us, was to gain speed and efficiency in ecclesiastical legislation. Such legislation has suffered from needless delay in Parliament, and many members of Parliament are opposed to the detailed discussion of religious matters in the Commons. The authority of Parliament is recognized, however, by the right to veto the legislation proposed, and an amendment in the Lords has altered the bill to provide that the royal assent to legislation will be given only on an address from both Houses.

Canon Masterman defends the bill against the charge that it gives no adequate power to the laity. Each piece of legislation proposed will have to receive the consent of the laity before it is submitted to Parliament. While it is true that at present the Diocesan Conference and the Provincial House of Laymen attract only a few laymen specially interested in ecclesiastical matters, nevertheless, if real power is given to a lay court adequate lay representation will follow. The awakening of the laity to their new religious responsibilities will be a gradual process. No radical program of change is contemplated, nor could such a program obtain the consent of Parliament.

On the charge that by the bill the Church of England is changed into a sect, Canon Masterman recognizes that in a sense it has been a sect ever since the toleration of other denominations began. It is useless to pretend that persons entirely unconnected with the church are in any sense members in it. The church is not coextensive with the nation, and could only become so by the suppression of freedom of opinion or by ceasing to have any definite convictions. The latter alternative seems to be the solution chosen by some liberal churchmen.

The analogy is drawn between the new labor organization contemplated in the Whitney Reports and the ecclesiastical changes offered by the "Enabling Bill." The laity will be enlisted in loyal support of the church, when they are given real powers, as is the tendency on the part of labor in industry.

The Tenacity of the Privileged

It matters not whether he is an English nobleman, whose ancestors for many generations have taken their toll of the unrewarded service of men, or a self-made American millionaire, who in the process of being self-made has unmade numbers of his fellows, the man who enjoys great economic privilege is usually prepared to defend it with astonishing tenacity. The *New Republic* for July 23 publishes an account of some of

the proceedings of the British Coal Commission under the title, taken from the room in which the Commission met, "In the King's Robing Room." The sketch is from the pen of Walter Weyl. Some striking excerpts from the testimony of the coal owners, the chief of whom were dukes and lords, do much to illustrate the recent coal strike. The Duke of Northumberland blandly confesses, "As an owner of coal I do not perform any service to the community." The Duke of Hamilton, with an income estimated at £240,000 a year, has a little daughter who owns five mansions, yet his agent at the hearing testifies that the families of the Duke's mine workers live five or six in a room. This official sees nothing unfair in his master obtaining more than a shilling per ton on the coal produced and enjoying the air of the Riviera, while the actual workers receive less than a shilling per ton.

The phase that strikes Mr. Weyl most forcibly, however, is not the callous inhumanity of the owners. Rather it is the revolutionary suggestion in the whole procedure of the Commission. Among those representing the labor interests on the Commission are such aggressive reformers as R. A. Tawney and Sir Leo Chiozza Money. These men could not be expected to treat the owners gently. Their questions are based on the assumption that there should be something of a just distribution of economical privilege. But there is nothing to show that the peers understand the prospect of their being compelled to disgorge. Yet the Commission is a harbinger of revolution. "It is only in England that revolutions take place in the King's Robing Room, in the minutes of a Coal Commission." The likelihood of armed conflict playing a part in the outcome is not greater, Mr. Weyl thinks, than was the case in 1845, when the situation was relieved by reforms.

Turning to America we find evidence of a similar tenacity of the moneyed classes

editorially discussed in the *World Tomorrow* for July. While this attitude is not universal among employers, yet extreme instances of it appear. The editor refers to a demand from the New Jersey manufacturers for the dismissal of the chairman of the War Labor Board, whose crime was that he had foretold grave labor disturbances unless an understanding between capital and labor could be effected. A Boston captain of industry traced the labor agitation to the fact that laborers are "overfed." This indicates a total ignorance of actual conditions. The rise of living costs, especially the rise of the price of milk, has proved an increasing hardship to the wage-earners and their families. According to reports of the Health Department the proportion of underfed children in the city of New York reached 19 per cent in the year 1918. In 1914 it was 5 per cent, according to statistics of the United States Bureau of Labor. The cost of food went up 100 per cent during the war, while wages increased 18 per cent.

Peace and Immigration

Hon. Anthony Caminetti, Commissioner General of Immigration, asks the question,

"Need We Fear Immigration?" in a recent number of *Forum*. His answer acknowledges this difficulty of prophecy on the subject of immigration, as the European governments have not declared their policies on the question. Immigration is determined by social and economic conditions. Social improvements in European countries may be introduced which will tend to keep the populations contented where they are; but on the other hand taxes are sure to be extremely burdensome for some time to come. It is to be borne in mind that the population of European countries has actually been greatly diminished. The ties that bind people to their country have been strengthened rather than diminished by the war. Yet the migratory spirit has ever been strong among veterans of war, and America is the logical goal of those who would migrate. There is no serious probability of the United States becoming an emigrant nation. The Commissioner recommends in conclusion the employment during labor shortages of the available labor of Porto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Philippines in the United States as a means of binding those possessions loyally to the country.